



ROSS VALLEY SANITARY DISTRICT

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CONSTRUCTION DEBRIS CAUSES 842,000 GALLON SEWER SPILL IN KENTFIELD LARGE PIECES OF ASPHALT, RUBBER, HARDHATS, AND WIRE NEST PULLED FROM NEW SEWER PIPES

EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO ADDRESS OTHER FAILING PIPES IN THE SEWER SYSTEM ARE UNDERWAY IN ADVANCE OF NEXT STORM

WHO: Ross Valley Sanitary District, the 111-year-old sewer agency serving the Ross Valley, in Marin County.

WHAT: Experienced a major Sanitary Sewer Overflow of approximately 842,000 gallons on Friday evening in Kentfield, California. During the cleanup, large amounts of construction debris was discovered as the cause of the spill, which suggests gross contractor negligence or that an act of environmental terrorism has been committed. In a related event, for the last three weeks the district has been in the process of making emergency repairs to address ongoing Techite pipe failures and spills due to a manufacturer defect. With the current storms the district is working hard to address the possibility of additional spills.

WHERE: Briefing at Ross Valley Sanitary District Headquarters by Brett Richards, General Manager from 2:30 pm on today. The location is 2960 Kerner Boulevard, San Rafael (near UPS). Construction debris from the site is being moved to this location for photos/video.

WHY: There is no immediate public danger, however, the ongoing emergency repairs and the potential for additional spills are serious and may require the closing of roads.

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Ross Valley Sanitary District, the 111-year-old sewer agency serving the Ross Valley, experienced a major sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) that was discovered last Friday evening at approximately 7 p.m. Manholes located at several locations in Kentfield released an estimated 842,000 wastewater. While approximately 105,000 gallons of spill was recovered, the balance flowed into the stormwater system, which flows to Corte Madera Creek and the San Francisco Bay.

During the cleanup, large amounts of construction debris from the site where contractor JMB Construction had recently completed the district's Woodland-College-Goodhill capital improvement project, was removed from the district's pump station and sourced as the cause of the SSO.

"Large pieces of road asphalt and rubber from the Kent School running track, along with two hardhats, chunks clay dirt, and a big piece of wire nest somehow ended up in our brand new sewer pipes, " says Brett Richards, General Manager for the Ross Valley Sanitary District. "Some of the pieces of debris measured 30-inches wide by 6-inches thick, so it is hard to imagine that this was an accident."

It appears that with significant evidence that either gross contractor negligence or a crime has occurred that caused the spill.

Ross Valley Sanitary District (RVSD) maintenance crew was already on hand prior to the spill in order to monitor the sewer system that is impacted when storm water enters pipes and can increase the systems flow dramatically. The crew became alarmed when they noticed that the manholes were filling up quickly (surcharging) while the pump station downstream had expected flows. This unusual situation suggested a blockage of some kind had occurred in the system. The Marin Office of Emergency Services and Environmental Health, along with the Regional Water Quality Control Board were notified immediately about the spill.

The district is also in the process of making emergency repairs to its force main pipe that is made of Techite, a pipe material that has been an industry failure resulting in numerous lawsuits. The Techite pipe was partially replaced this year with the balance scheduled for next summer. When the pipe that was scheduled for repair next year began failing, the district began emergency repairs which are ongoing at this time.

"Unfortunately, SSO are not uncommon during big storm events as sewer districts throughout the Bay Area and U.S. are trying to deal with old and leaky sewer infrastructure," says Richards. "We have been aggressively dealing with this challenge and have spent millions of dollars this fiscal year alone replacing old pipe and have offered grant dollars to our customers to help them fix their private sewer pipes."